



IOWA OUTDOORS

Iowa Department of Natural Resources
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March 13, 2007

**This is the final ice fishing report for the season.
Weekly fishing reports begin April 3.**

1. Largemouth Bass Virus Found at Brown's Lake in Pool 13 of the Upper Mississippi River
2. Winter Storms Impact on Wildlife Expected to be Minimal
3. Water Trail Grants Fund Diverse Projects
4. Meeting Set to Discuss Proposed Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area
5. Now is the Time to Take Care of Bagworms on Trees
6. Time to Order Trees and Shrubs for Spring Planting
7. Ice Fishing Report

LARGEMOUTH BASS VIRUS FOUND AT BROWN'S LAKE IN POOL 13 OF THE UPPER MISSISSIPPI RIVER

BELLEVUE – The presence of Largemouth Bass Virus (LMBV) was confirmed in Brown's Lake in Pool 13 of the Upper Mississippi River by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service La Crosse Fish Health Lab, in La Crosse, Wis. Mike Steuck, fisheries research biologist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) stationed at Bellevue, collected the largemouth bass samples in late October 2006.

"We were seeing a good number of skinny largemouth bass. We did not find any largemouth bass dead or see other species in poor conditions. When we returned a week later to collect the fish for analysis, we found very few fish in poor condition," Steuck said. The DNR collected largemouth bass of all sizes to be analyzed for the LMBV. Steuck said that although poor body condition is not an associated symptom of LMBV, it did make them take a closer look and see if the virus was there.

Brown's Lake is a backwater in Pool 13 of the Mississippi River about 10 miles south of Bellevue. The DNR collects largemouth bass samples annually from Brown's Lake to evaluate the catch and release regulation on black bass. "Information collected during the sampling allows us to evaluate the regulation and also to keep track of the condition of these fish," Steuck said. "We've looked at the largemouth bass length and

weight data from the past 20 years and found no change in the condition of those fish. We have a very healthy population of largemouth bass.”

Largemouth bass virus was first detected at the Santee-Cooper Reservoir in South Carolina in 1995 and had been an issue for states in the south. It has since been found in 23 other states, including Illinois, Minnesota, Missouri and Wisconsin, LMBV has been detected in Iowa in 2002, when it was confirmed in Pools 10 and 11 of the Mississippi River and in 2005 at Lake Sugema.

Steuck said LMBV is a short-term issue for a lake and once the virus is present, largemouth bass will build up their immune system to address it. Subsequent outbreaks impact fewer fish than the initial one.

“The virus is in the water and only affects largemouth bass. However, other fish species can be carriers,” Steuck said. “Affected largemouth bass do not have obvious signs that they have the virus. We just happened to sample the fish before the fish were stressed and the virus had a chance to flourish.” In some populations affected by LMBV sores and lesions can be found on the fish.

As for the question “are the fish safe to eat,” he said anglers should use their best judgement. “Cook the fish thoroughly,” he said. “The fish are safe to consume, but you probably should avoid eating sick or dying fish or animals of any species. The virus is not transferable to warm-blooded animals.”

As is the case with most viruses, Steuck said there is not a lot that can be done once LMBV is present in a lake. How the virus arrived is difficult to say, but he said a number of conditions could occur at Brown’s Lake or other backwater lakes on the Mississippi River to stress the fish population, and that stress can make fish more vulnerable to the virus.

Stress can lower the fish’s natural defenses against disease and can be the opening the LMBV needs to impact the fish. Bass living in the Mississippi River may encounter a variety of stressful conditions including poor water quality consisting of low water levels, high temperatures and low dissolved oxygen levels; repeated handling by anglers, long distance movements to the few over wintering areas and crowded conditions in suitable backwater habitats.

Steuck said anglers can help prevent the spread of LMBV by handling fish gently if they are going to release them and by not moving fish from one body of water to another. Anglers should also follow the rules by not releasing live bait into the water and to call the DNR if they see dead or dying fish. Anglers can also thoroughly disinfect their live wells and holding tanks with a bleach mixture made of 1 cup of bleach in 1 gallon of water and let it soak for 30 minutes. This bleach concentration and soak time is sufficient to kill the virus.

This is especially important with the finding of Viral Hemorrhagic Septicemia (VHS) which has been found to cause large fish kills in the Great Lakes Region. VHS is another pathogen that has been found to infect at least 37 fish species including bass, walleye, bluegill, crappie, channel catfish, northern pike and musky. “We want to minimize the spread of any disease in our aquatic systems just as we wouldn’t want to spread the flu from person to person where we live, work or go to school,” Steuck said.

For more information, contact Steuck at 563-872-5495.

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WINTER STORMS IMPACT ON WILDLIFE EXPECTED TO BE MINIMAL

BOONE - The recent snowstorms prompted calls from concerned Iowans about the welfare of upland game populations. Calls reported seeing birds congregated in shelterbelts and near roads, where numerous birds had been hit by vehicles.

Todd Bogenschutz upland wildlife biologist for the Iowa DNR, expects losses from predation to increase with the increased visibility of birds on snowdrifts.

The storms dumped the most snow on the northwestern half of the state. Bogenschutz said he expects some birds in marginal habitats were lost during the storms, but that massive loss is not expected. Normal over winter losses usually run about 15 to 25 percent of the hen population.

How much impact these storms had on the population will not be known until the DNR conducts its roadside counts in August, said Bogenschutz. “The warm temperatures this week helped the birds tremendously,” he said.

Many individuals contacted the DNR about feed the birds and other wildlife. The DNR does not recommend people feed the birds in most situations as it concentrates the birds for predators. It also does not address the larger issue of the lack of secure roosting cover.

The DNR does not supply food for feeding wildlife, but if people feel the need to feed the birds themselves, the DNR offers these guidelines:

- Keep the food adjacent to good winter cover (cattails, switchgrass, or conifers) and away from tall trees, scatter the food so as to keep the birds dispersed throughout the habitat
- Do not put food on the road as it increases the risks of vehicle collisions.
- Once feeding begins it **MUST** continue throughout the remainder of the winter, as the animals become dependant upon it rather than seeking out other food and cover sources

- Perhaps the best advice, said Bogenschutz, is to contact your local DNR biologist or Pheasants Forever chapter and plant a food plot or other winter habitat for the birds for next year. A little advanced planning is the best defense the birds have against Mother Nature come next winter, he said.

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WATER TRAIL GRANTS FUND DIVERSE PROJECTS

The Iowa Natural Resource Commission has approved \$61,181 in projects that will be funded under the Iowa Department of Natural Resources' Water Trails Program. That amount will support the development of 253 miles of water trails. A total of \$72,844 was requested, and the projects selected will help leverage \$283,565 worth of projects.

"Just as these projects are being awarded, with this warm spell, I'm sure lots of folks are thinking about getting canoes and kayaks out on the water," says Nate Hoogeveen, Iowa DNR River Programs coordinator. "Thanks to these funds, Iowans will begin seeing nice launches, clear signage, and enriching information about waterways all around the state."

Examples of projects include:

- An on-water wildlife viewing trail through swamp-like backwaters of Lake Odessa, adjacent to the Mississippi River in southeastern Iowa.
- Funding for two counties to create a water trail through the scenic bluffs and wild lands of the Maquoketa River.
- A boat-based camping area at Yellow Banks Park in Polk County.
- A water trail through small rapids and wild areas on the Middle Raccoon and South Raccoon rivers in Guthrie and Dallas counties. The Middle Raccoon River is a Protected Water Area, designated for its scenic and unique geological qualities.

Iowa DNR Water Trails Awards for Fiscal Year 2008

- Maquoketa River Water Trail, Jackson County; \$6,560 to the Jackson County Conservation Board.
- Maquoketa River Water Trail, Mon Maq Dam to Pictured Rocks; \$5,000 to the Jones County Conservation Board.
- Odessa Water Trail; \$5,962 to Tri-River Conservation Foundation.
- Bends and Beaches, Lower Wapsipinicon Water Trail; \$9,512 to the Clinton County Conservation Board.
- Middle/South Raccoon River Water Trail; \$13,776 to the Dallas County Conservation Board.
- Wapsipinicon River Water Trail; \$9,134 to the Bremer County Conservation Board.
- Yellow Banks Watercraft Campground; \$4,485 to the Polk County Conservation Board.

- Skunk River Water Trail; \$5,507 to the Polk County Conservation Board.

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MEETING SET TO DISCUSS PROPOSED AMPHIBIAN AND REPTILE CONSERVATION AREA

WAPELLO – The Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) will discuss a proposed state Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area (ARCA) at 7 p.m., on March 27, at the Louisa County Conservation Board headquarters (12635 County Rd G56), about 3 miles north and 1 3/4 miles east of Wapello. The meeting is open to the public.

The proposed ARCA is a mixture of privately and publicly owned land encompassing the lower Cedar and Iowa rivers and Mississippi River floodplain from Muscatine to Montrose. The creation of amphibian and reptile conservation areas is a new concept, and the Iowa DNR is fully behind this first in the nation effort.

“The proposed Southeast Iowa Amphibian and Reptile Conservation Area is a unique area containing the highest number of amphibian and reptile species and the most number of rare species in the state,” said Karen Kinkead, DNR wildlife diversity program biologist. “This area offers a variety of habitats to a host of declining species. From grassland species like ornate box turtle and six-lined racerunner, savanna species such as prairie kingsnake, to wetland species like central newt and cricket frog, the river corridors of this area and their surrounding uplands provide a perfect setting for this proposed amphibian and reptile conservation area.”

The ARCA concept is focused on amphibian and reptile conservation on a large landscape scale, and the program’s success is dependent on partnerships between public agencies, private conservation organizations, and private landowners. Public land, land owned by private conservation organizations, and land with private conservation easements provide crucial core areas for amphibian and reptile populations. Areas around these core lands also need to be managed for good wildlife habitat, and much of that property is privately held.

“Landowners or farmers who would like to assist with amphibian and reptile conservation on their land will be offered technical guidance and financial assistance when it is available,” Kinkead said. “Participation is voluntary, with no restrictions or requirements placed on the landowner.”

“The DNR is excited about the partnership potential for this ARCA, as well as for the opportunity for folks to work together to improve habitat for more than 70 percent of Iowa’s amphibians and reptiles,” said Doug Harr, state coordinator for the Wildlife Diversity Program. “This is a great example of how habitat can be well-managed for amphibians and reptiles without extensive government ownership of land.”

For more information, contact Kinhead at 515-432-2823 or Harr at 515-281-4815

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NOW IS THE TIME TO TAKE CARE OF BAGWORMS ON TREES

The 2006 growing season seemed to be an especially active one for a caterpillar commonly known as the bagworm (*Thyridopteryx ephemeraeformis*). While this pest can be found on deciduous trees (those that lose their leaves in the fall), it is most damaging to conifers, also called evergreens.

“Defoliated or partially defoliated deciduous trees are able to put out a new flush of leaves during the growing season and reduce the impact of the bagworm. Conifers, however, are unable to do this and the result is the death of the affected branch or branches. If the damage is extensive enough, the tree can die,” said Matt Brewer, urban forestry technician and certified arborist with the Iowa Department of Natural Resources’ forestry bureau.

The most common host trees for bagworms include spruces, red cedar, arborvitae, and white pine. Trees located in the southern half of the state are impacted to a larger degree since the bagworm thrives in warmer climates.

“Bagworms can be spotted by their spindle-shaped protective bag, which is silken and up to two inches long. The bag typically also contains some foliage and or bark from the host tree, and hangs from the spot where the caterpillar is currently residing. The bag serves as a home and provides protection from predators. Since the insect lives in the bag, it can be moved if the bagworm changes its location,” he said.

“If you have a bagworm problem, it can be reduced by picking off the bags by hand. This can be done throughout the winter and early spring while the insect is dormant,” Brewer said. “Bags should be burned or otherwise destroyed to prevent the insect from surviving and returning to the same or another tree. It’s necessary to remove every bag from the tree since hundreds of caterpillars can survive from a missed bag. Be sure to also get the silken attachment to the twig, in order to prevent further damage to the branch. By removing the bags, you will have improved the health of the tree, especially in the case of conifers.”

For more information about bagworms, please contact your District Forester at www.iowadnr.gov/forestry/district.html .

For more information, contact Matt Brewer, Urban Forestry Technician, at 515-242-6892 or matt.brewer@dnr.state.ia.us .

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TIME TO ORDER TREES AND SHRUBS FOR SPRING PLANTING

AMES – Landowners considering planting some wildlife habitat or preventing soil erosion should act now to order conservation trees and shrubs from the Iowa State Forest Nursery.

“We have excellent supplies of native oaks such as red, white, bur and swamp white along with good quantities of silver maple and many other species for this spring’s planting season,” said John Walkowiak, chief of the Iowa Department of Natural Resources (DNR) forestry bureau.

The State Forest Nursery, in Ames, supplies at the costs of production, conservation bareroot seedlings of more than 45 different native tree and shrub species for Iowa landowners to purchase and plant for conservation purposes such as reforestation, soil erosion control, water quality protection and wildlife habitat.

State Forest Nursery conservation trees and shrubs are for sale from \$25 per 100 plants for evergreen species such as pine and spruce to \$37 to \$45 per 100 plants for hardwood trees and shrubs such as oak and chokecherry. The minimum order is 500 plants.

“If you are looking at just starting out in conservation planting you may want to consider planting a wildlife packet of 200 trees and shrubs. The State Forest Nursery has designed special wildlife packets in cooperation with the National Wild Turkey Federation, Pheasants Forever and the DNR’s wildlife bureau that includes such species as bur oak, dogwood, pine, Redoiser dogwood, highbush cranberry, wild plum, red cedar, or and others,” Walkowiak said. These wildlife packets sell for \$90.

A landowner may also “Create-Your-Own” packet that allows the individual to select up to four different tree or shrub species for \$90. Each species comes in packages of 50.

“For those with a larger backyard, we have a 20 tree and shrub songbird packet of oak, pine, plum, chokecherry, dogwood and serviceberry that was designed in cooperation with Iowa Audubon that sells for \$20,” he said.

These plants are available for home delivery at a cost of \$5 per 100 plants. Plants may also be picked up at the State Forest Nursery.

For more information or to order conservation trees and shrubs from the State Forest Nursery call 1-800-865-2477 Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., or on line at www.iowatreeplanting.com. The State Forest Nursery accepts personal checks,

VISA or Master Card. Trees and shrubs will be available for shipping from early April until May 31.

For more information, contact Walkowiak at 515-242-5966.

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Iowa Fishing Report

www.iowadnr.gov

March 13, 2007

This is the final ice fishing report for the season. The weekly fishing reports begin April 3. For current information on fishing conditions for your lake or area, contact the office in that district. Phone numbers are listed with each district report.

Northeast

Mississippi River Pools 9 to 15: On Monday, tailwaters are mostly iced in at Guttenberg and Lynxville, Wis., but ice is receding. Anglers need to push through the ice to get to fishing spots where sauger biting fair. NOTE: Due to construction on Lock and Dam 10 at Guttenberg by the Army Corps of Engineers, the DNR boat ramp remains closed and will be closed during much of the spring sauger fishing. All boaters will need to launch at the DNR City Boat ramp. For ice anglers, bluegills are biting well at **Mud Lake** in Pool 11 above Dubuque. Jigs and wax worms are the best bet. Bluegills and small largemouth bass are biting at **Bussey Lake** in Pool 10 on wax worms and tip-ups. Anglers are catching small bluegills at **Norwegian Lake** in Pool 10 by McGregor. Bluegills are biting well at **Scroggins lakes** in Pool 10 off Hwy. 18 Bridge to Prairie Du Chien, Wis. The river is rising with snowmelt. Be careful in any flowing water sloughs and near edges of backwaters. Ice in the middle of the lakes remains quite good in most spots at 10 to 14 inches but pockets of poor ice will develop.

Volga Lake: Fish are being caught in the early morning and evening on jigs tipped with wax worms. Use best judgment when going out on the ice due to warmer weather.

Lake Meyer (Winneshiek): Fishing has been slow but all sizes of fish are being caught. Ice conditions are beginning to deteriorate with warmer weather.

Lake Hendricks (Howard): Fishing has been variable with some sorting for decent sized fish. Warmer weather is beginning to deteriorate ice conditions.

Trout streams are offering good opportunities for the ice shy angler. With warmer temperatures, some streams are beginning to experience increased flow and turbid water conditions due to runoff and snow melt.

For information on fishing in northeast Iowa, call the regional office in Manchester at 563-927-3276.

Southeast

Mississippi River Pools 16 to 19: The water temperature at Lock and Dam 16 (Muscatine) is 34 degrees and the river pool stage for Pool 16 is 12.06 feet. Water levels are expected to rise over the next several days. Fishing has been fair for walleye and sauger on jigs tipped with minnows in tailwaters 15 – 17.

All other areas in southeast Iowa have rapidly deteriorating ice conditions and are considered unsafe for ice fishing.

For more information on fishing in southeast Iowa, call the regional office in Brighton at 319-694-2430.

Southwest

Don Williams (Boone): Ice conditions are decent.

Banner Lakes @ Sunset Park (Warren): Ice conditions are decent. The north lake is in the process of being renovated, so there aren't any fish in this lake. A few trout from the last stocking may still be lurking in the south lake. Don't forget your trout stamp!

Lake Ahquabi (Warren): Ice conditions are poor around the edge of the lake.

Big Creek and Lost Lake (Polk): Ice conditions are fair. Anglers are catching bluegills, 8-to 9-inch crappies and small walleyes.

Rock Creek (Jasper): Ice conditions are poor around the edge of the lake.

Easter Lake (Polk): Ice conditions may not be suitable. Some parts of the lake have opened up.

Ada Haden (Story): Ice conditions are decent. Anglers are catching crappies.

Dale Maffitt (Polk): Anglers are catching acceptable sized bluegills and crappies, along with an occasional perch.

Saylorville Dam (Polk): A few walleyes are beginning to bite.

Scott Street Dam (Polk): Walleyes are starting to bite.

Contact: Ben Dodd (515) 432-2823 for information on the above area lakes.

Ice conditions are considered unsafe on most lakes. Many ponds in the area have open water.

Contact: Gary Sobatka (641) 464-3108 for information on the fishing conditions within the Mt Ayr District.

Contact: Brian Hayes (712) 769-2587 for information on the fishing conditions within the Cold Springs District.

For more information on general fishing in southwest Iowa, call the regional office in Lewis at 712-769-2587.

Northwest

Spirit Lake (Dickinson): Anglers are catching bluegills on the grade. Sorting is required for larger fish.

West Okoboji (Dickinson): Bluegills are being caught in Little Millers Bay, the Wahpeton Canals, Emerson Canals and between Eagle and Pocahontas Point. Fish are being caught between 4 and 12 feet of water. Perch are being caught off of Spencer Beach and between Eagle Point and Pocahontas Point. Small jigs with wax worms seem to work best.

Ice conditions on most lakes in the **Black Hawk district** are not safe. Ice is pulling away from shore and lots of water running through the ice.

Storm Lake (Buena Vista): Anglers were fishing the lake on Sunday and catching a few walleyes using live minnows under a bobber and jigging spoons tipped with a minnow head. Don't forget the 17 to 22-inch slot.

Clear Lake (Cerro Gordo): Anglers are catching a few yellow bass in the deep water around the Island and Dodges Point. Jigging spoons tipped with minnow heads are working the best. Walleye fishing has been slow. Anglers fishing the sunrise and sunset periods report some walleye action. The lake has up to 20 inches of ice. Warm temperatures have started to deteriorate the top few inches. Use caution around the aeration systems and storm water inlets.

Blue Pit, Lester Milligan Park (Cerro Gordo): Three trout stockings (4,500 total fish) have been placed in Blue Pit. Anglers are still catching trout using small jigs and wax worms. Trout seem to be near shore in the early morning and evening hours.

For more information on fishing in northwest Iowa, call the regional office in Spirit Lake at 712-336-1840.

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